

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

**FIREBREAK**

**(Feet)  
Code 394**

**DEFINITION**

A strip of bare land or vegetation that retards fire.

**PURPOSES**

- To prevent the spread of wildfire.
- To control prescribed burns (for sugarcane only).

**CONDITION WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES**

All land uses where protection from wildfire is needed or prescribed burning is applied.

**CRITERIA**

**General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes**

Firebreaks may be temporary or permanent and shall consist of fire-resistant vegetation, non-flammable materials, bare ground, or a combination of these.

Firebreaks will be of sufficient width and length to contain the expected fire.

Firebreaks shall be located to minimize risk to the resources being protected, including locating on the contour where practicable to minimize risk of soil erosion.

Plant species selected for vegetated firebreaks will be noninvasive, comprised of attributes making them capable of retarding fire, and easy to maintain.

Erosion control measures shall prevent sediment from leaving the site.

Comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations, during the installation, operation and maintenance of this practice.

**CONSIDERATIONS**

Use barriers such as streams, lakes, ponds,

rock cliffs, roads, field borders, skidtrails, landings, drainage canals, railroads, utility right-of-ways, cultivated land, or other areas as existing firebreaks.

Attempt to locate firebreaks near ridge crests and valley bottoms. If winds are predictable, firebreaks should be located perpendicular to the wind and on the windward side of the area to be protected.

Consider the selection of plant species that will enhance the needs of wildlife in the area.

Design and layout should include multiple uses.

Consider cultural resources and environmental concerns such as threatened and endangered species of plants and animals, natural areas, and wetlands.

**PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS**

Specifications for applying this practice shall be prepared for each site and recorded using documentation and narrative statements in the conservation plan and the burn plan, or other acceptable documentation.

**OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE**

Mow or graze vegetative firebreaks to avoid a build-up of excess litter and to control weeds. Inspect all firebreaks for woody materials such as dead limbs or blown down trees and remove them from the firebreak. Inspect firebreaks annually and rework bare ground firebreaks as necessary to keep them clear of flammable vegetation. Repair erosion control measures as necessary to ensure proper function. Access by vehicles or people will be controlled to prevent damage to the firebreak. Bare ground firebreaks, which are no longer needed, will be stabilized preferably with suitable vegetation.

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service.